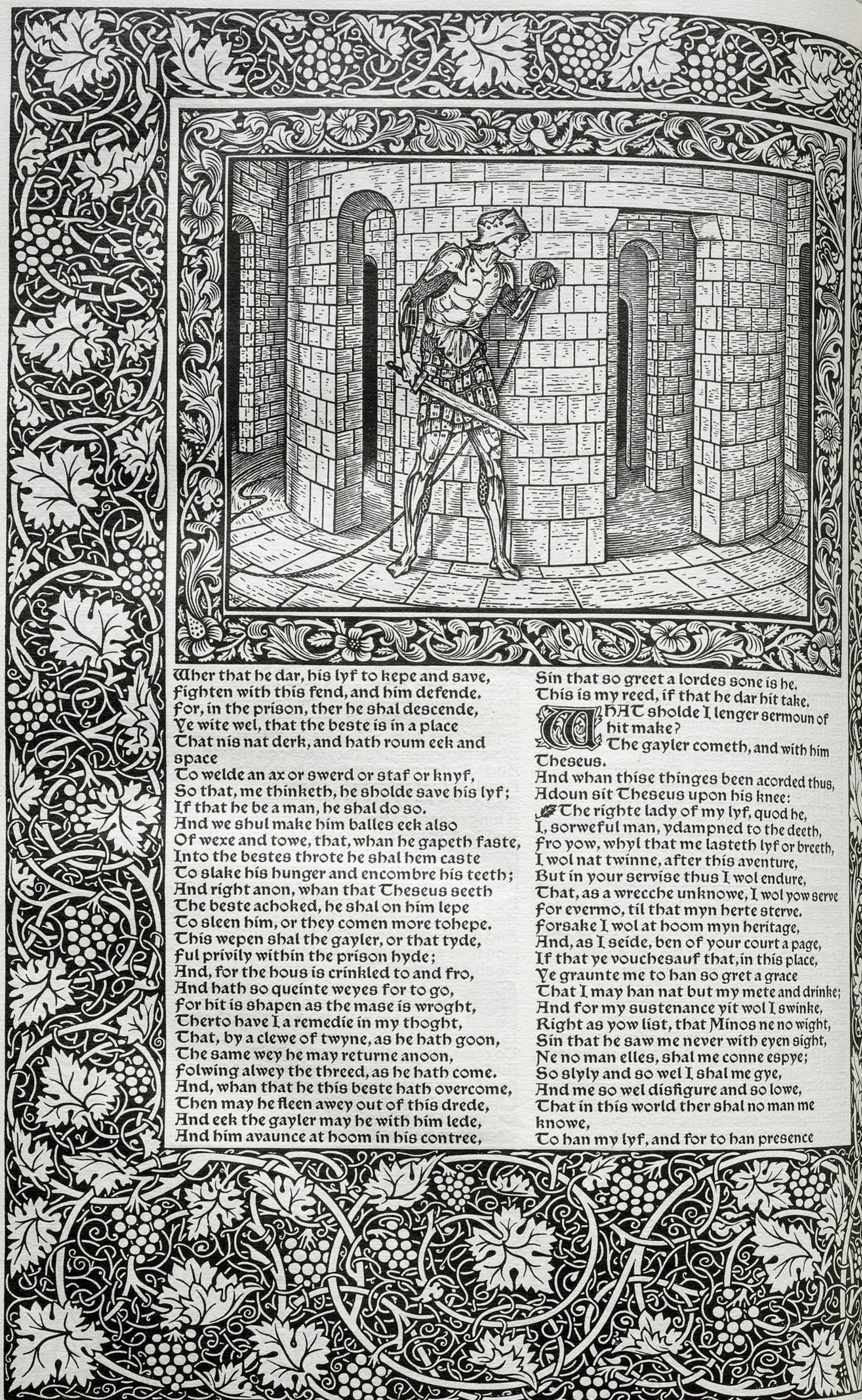




Wher that he dar, his lyf to kepe and save,
fighten with this fend, and him defende,
for, in the prison, ther he shal descende,
Ye wite wel, that the beste is in a place
That nis nat derk, and hath roun eek and
space
To welde an ax or swerd or staf or knyf,
So that, me thinketh, he sholde save his lyf;
If that he be a man, he shal do so.
And we shul make him balles eek also
Of waxe and towe, that, whan he gapeth faste,
Into the bestes throte he shal hem caste
To slake his hunger and encombre his teeth;
And right anon, whan that Theseus seeth
The beste achoked, he shal on him lepe
To sleen him, or they comen more tohepe.
This wepen shal the gayler, or that tyde,
ful privily within the prison hyde;
And, for the hous is crinkled to and fro,
And hath so quente weyes for to go,
for hit is shapen as the mase is wrought,
Therto have I a remedie in my thought,
That, by a clewe of twyne, as he hath goon,
The same wey he may returne anon,
folwing alwey the threed, as he hath come.
And, whan that he this beste hath overcome,
Then may he fleen away out of this drede,
And eek the gayler may he with him lede,
And him avaunce at hoom in his contree,

Sin that so greet a lordes sone is he,
This is my reed, if that he dar hit take.
WHAT sholde I lenger sermoun of
hit make?
The gayler cometh, and with him
Theseus.
And whan thise thinges been acorded thus,
Adoun sit Theseus upon his knee:
The righte lady of my lyf, quod he,
I, sorweful man, ydampned to the deeth,
fro yow, whyl that me lasteth lyf or breeth,
I wol nat twinne, after this aventure,
But in your servise thus I wol endure,
That, as a wrecche unknowe, I wol yow serve
for evermo, til that myn herte sterve.
forsake I wol at hoom myn heritage,
And, as I seide, ben of your court a page,
If that ye vouchesauf that, in this place,
Ye graunte me to han so gret a grace
That I may han nat but my mete and drinke;
And for my sustenance yit wol I swinke,
Right as yow list, that Minos ne no wight,
Sin that he saw me never with eyen sight,
Ne no man elles, shal me conne espye;
So stily and so wel I shal me gye,
And me so wel disfigure and so lowe,
That in this world ther shal no man me
knowe,
To han my lyf, and for to han presence

Of yow, that doon to me this excellence.
And to my fader shal I senden here
This worthy man, that is now your gaylere,
And, him to guerdon, that he shal wel be
Don of the grettest men of my contree.
And yif I dorste seyn, my lady bright,
I am a kinges sone, and eek a knight;
As wolde God, yif that hit mighte be
Ye weren in my contree, alle three,
And I with yow, to bere yow companye,
Chan shulde ye seen yif that I therof lye!
And, if I profre yow in low manere
To ben your page and serven yow right here,
But I yow serve as lowly in that place,
I prey to Mars to yive me swiche a grace
That shames deeth on me ther mote falle,
And deeth and povert to my frendes alle;
And that my spirit by nighte mote go
After my deeth, and walke to and fro;
That I mote of a traitour have a name,
for which my spirit go, to do me shame!
And yif I ever claime other degree,
But if ye vouchesauf to yive hit me,
As I have seid, of shames deeth I deye!
And mercy, lady! I can nat elles seye!
SEEMLY knight was Theseus to see,
And yong, but of a twenty yer and three;
But whoso hadde yseyn his countenance,
He wolde have wept, for routhe of his penaunce;
for which this Adriane in this manere
Answerde to his profre and to his chere.
A kinges sone, and eek a knight, quod she,
To been my servant in so low degree,
God shilde hit, for the shame of women alle!
And leve me never swich a cas befall!
But sende yow grace and sleighte of herte also,
Yow to defende and knightly sleen your fo,
And leve herafter that I may yow finde
To me and to my suster here so kinde,
That I repente nat to give yow lyf!
Yif were hit better that I were your wyf,
Sin that ye been as gentil born as I,
And have a reume, nat but faste by,
Then that I suffred gittles yow to sterve,
Or that I let yow as a page serve;
Hit is not profit, as unto your kinrede;
But what is that that man nil do for drede?
And to my suster, sin that hit is so
That she mot goon with me, if that I go,
Or elles suffre deeth as wel as I,
That ye unto your sone as trewely
Doon her be wedded at your hoom coming.
This is the fynal ende of al this thing;
Ye swere hit heer, on al that may be sworn.
E, lady myn, quod he, or elles torn
Mote I be with the Minotaur tomorwe!
And haveth herof my herte/blood to borwe,
Yif that ye wile; if I had knyf or spere,
I wolde hit leten out, and theron swere,
for than at erst I wot ye wil me leve.
By Mars, that is the cheef of my bileve,
So that I mighte liven and nat faile
Tomorwe for tacheve my bataille,
Inolde never fro this place flee,
Til that ye shuld the verray preve see.

ff 4

for now, if that the sooth I shal yow say,
I have ylowed yow ful many a day,
Thogh ye ne wiste hit nat, in my contree.
And aldermost desyred yow to see
Of any erthly living creature;
Upon my trouthe I swere, and yow assure,
Thise seven yer I have your servant be;
Now have I yow, and also have ye me,
My dere herte, of Athenes duchesse!
THIS lady smyleth at his stedfastnesse,
And at his hertly wordes, and his chere,
And to her suster seide in this manere,
At softly: Now, suster myn, quod she,
Now be we duchesses, bothe I and ye,
And sikered to the regals of Athenes,
And bothe herafter lykly to be quenes,
And saved fro his deeth a kinges sone,
As ever of gentil women is the wone
To save a gentil man, emforth hir might,
In honest cause, and namely in his right.
Me thinketh no wight oghte herof us blame,
Ne beren us therfor an evel name.
AND shortly of this matere for to make,
This Theseus of her bath leve ytake,
And every point performed was in dede
As ye have in this covenant herd me rede.
His wepen, his clew, his thing that I have said,
Was by the gayler in the hous ylaid
Ther as this Minotaur hath his dwelling,
Right faste by the dore, at his entring.
And Theseus is lad unto his deeth,
And forth unto this Minotaur he geeth,
And by the teching of this Adriane
He overcom this beste, and was his bane;
And out he cometh by the clewe again
ful prevely, whan he this beste hath slain;
And by the gayler geten bath a barge,
And of his wyves tresor gan hit charge,
And took his wyf, and eek her suster free,
And eek the gayler, and with hem alle three
Is stole away out of the lond by nighte,
And to the contree of Ennopye him dighte
Ther as he had a frend of his knowinge.
Ther festen they, ther dauncen they and singe;
And in his armes hath this Adriane,
That of the beste hath kept him from his bane;
And gat him ther a newe barge anon,
And of his contree folk a ful gret woon,
And taketh his leve, and hoomward saileth he.
And in an yle, amid the wilde see,
Ther as ther dwelte creature noon
Save wilde bestes, and that ful many oon,
He made his ship alonde for to sette;
And in that yle half a day he lette,
And seide, that on the lond he moste him reste.
His mariners han doon right as him leste;
And, for to tellen shortly in this cas,
Whan Adriane his wyf aslepe was,
for that her suster fairer was than she,
He taketh her in his hond, and forth goth he
To shippe, and as a traitour stal his way
Whyl that this Adriane aslepe lay,
And to his contree ward he saileth blyve,
A twenty devil way the wind him dryve!
And fond his fader drenched in the see.

439

The
Legend of
Goode
Wimmen